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(54) **CONTENT DISCOVERY AND PLAYBACK IN A NETWORK ENVIRONMENT**

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Oct. 6, 2014, now Pat. No. 9,197,924, which is a
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Dec. 19, 2012, now Pat. No. 8,925,017.

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(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **H04N 21/482** (2013.01); **H04N 21/2665**

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21/435 (2013.01); **H04N 21/4314** (2013.01);
H04N 21/4622 (2013.01); **H04N 21/4782**
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21/6118 (2013.01); **H04N 21/6125** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

USPC 725/48, 51-52
See application file for complete search history.

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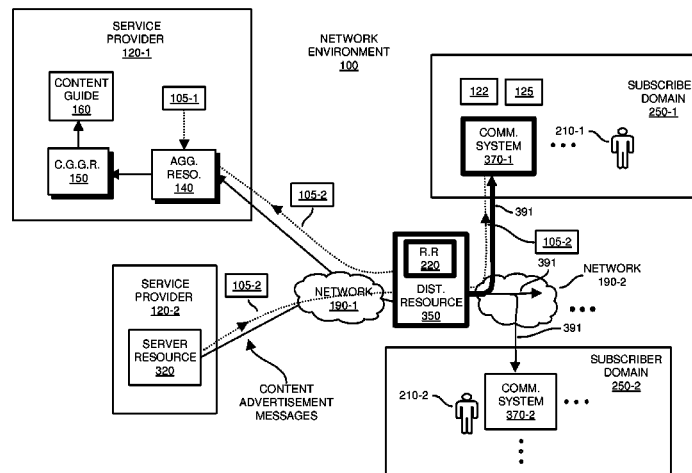
Primary Examiner — Hunter B Lonsberry

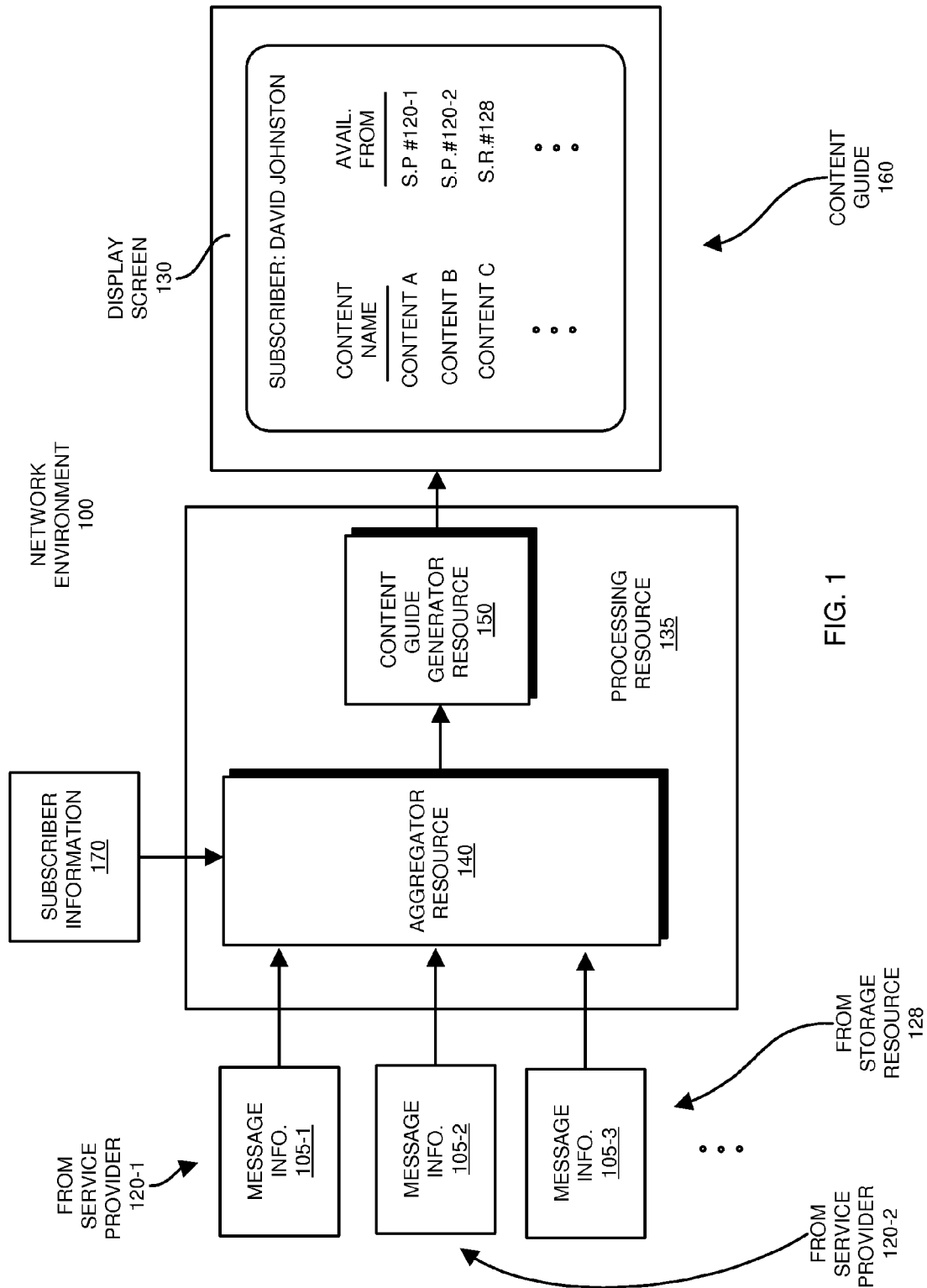
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A processing resource detects that a subscriber entity subscribes to at least a first content service provider and a second content service provider. The processing resource receives a first message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for selective retrieval from the first content service provider. The processing resource receives a second message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for selective retrieval from the second content service provider. Based on at least the first message and the second message, the processing resource produces a content guide to include at least first content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the first service provider and second content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the second service provider. Via display of the content guide, a respective subscriber is able to view content available from multiple service providers.

29 Claims, 12 Drawing Sheets





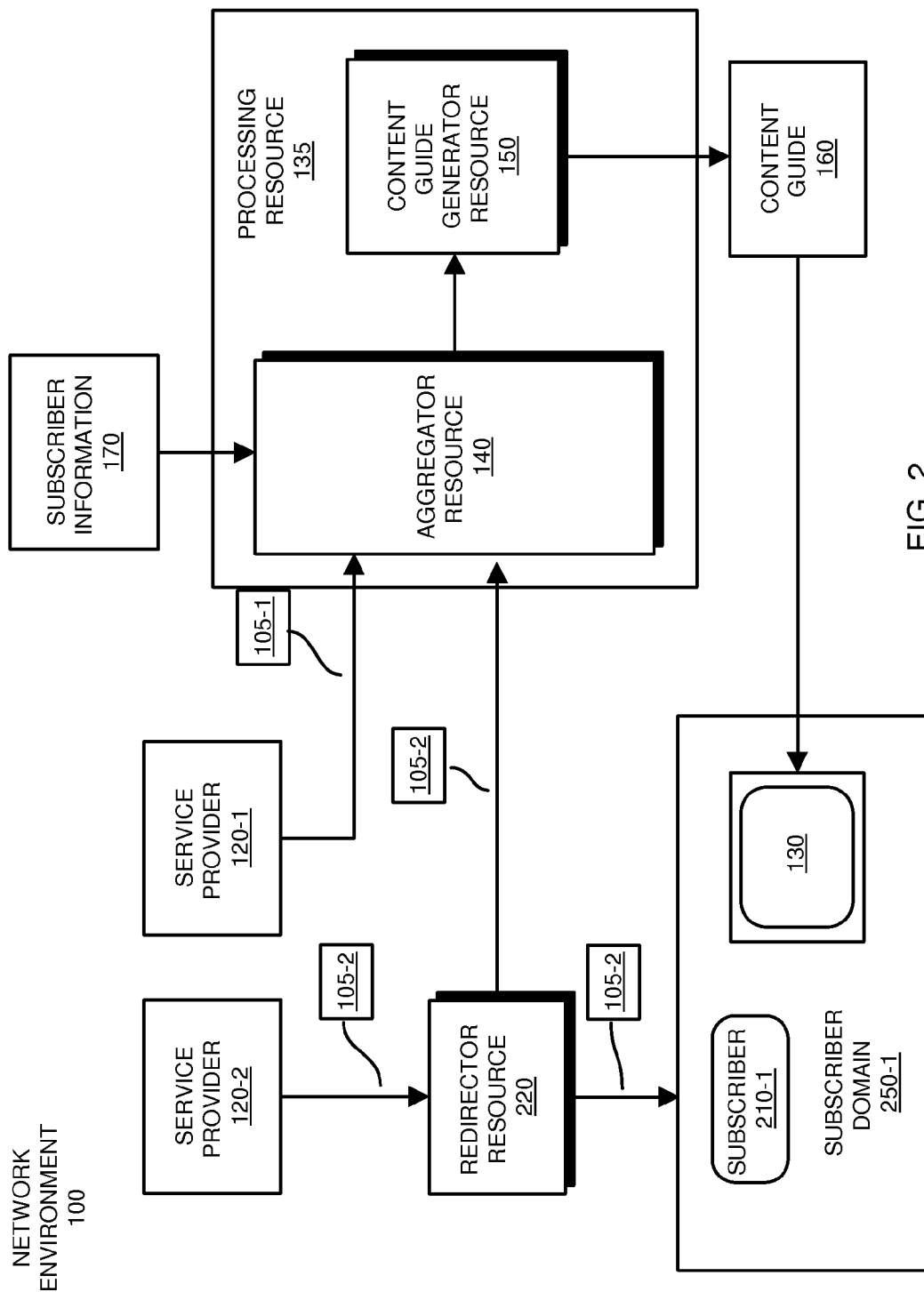


FIG. 2

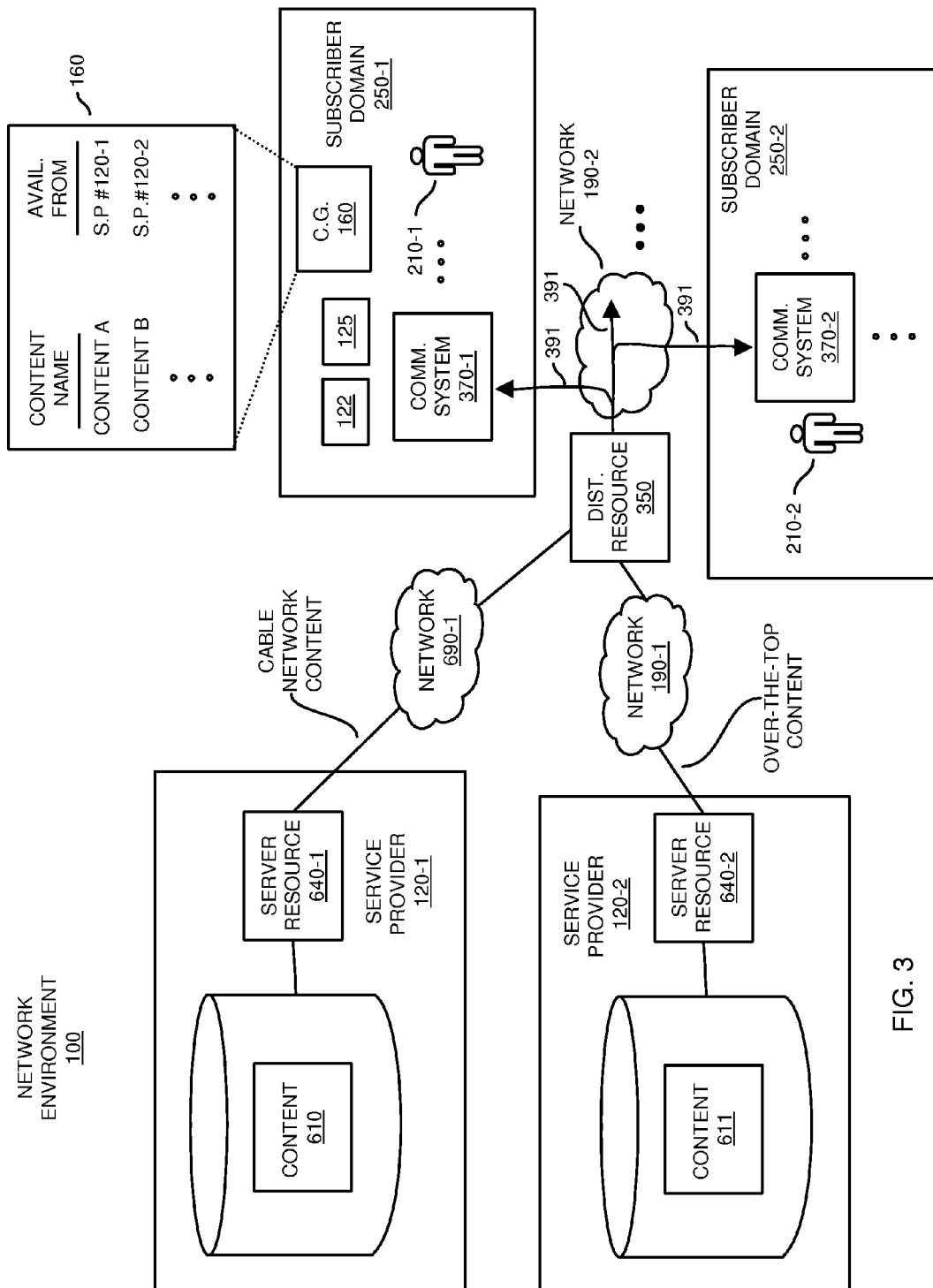


FIG. 3

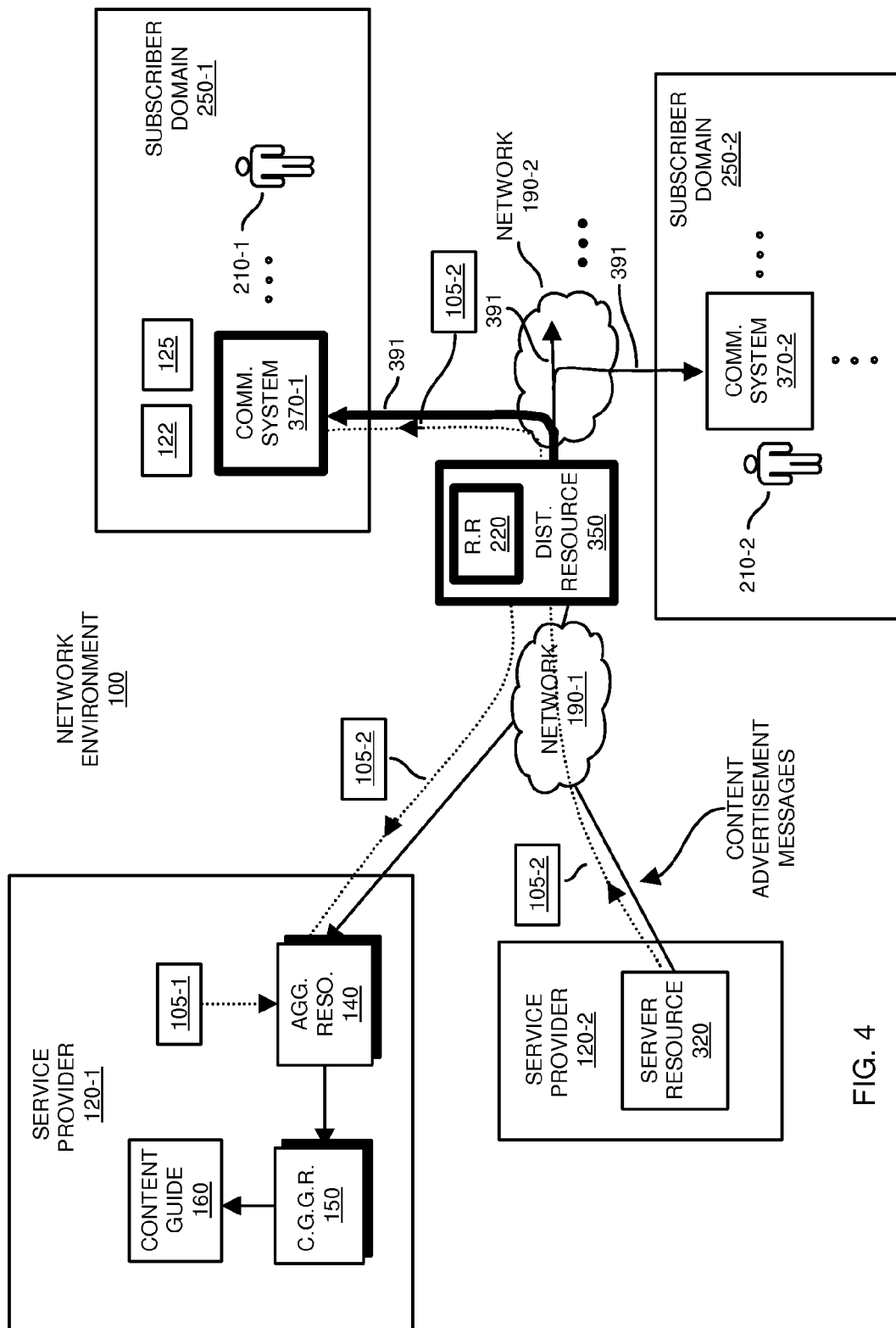


FIG. 4

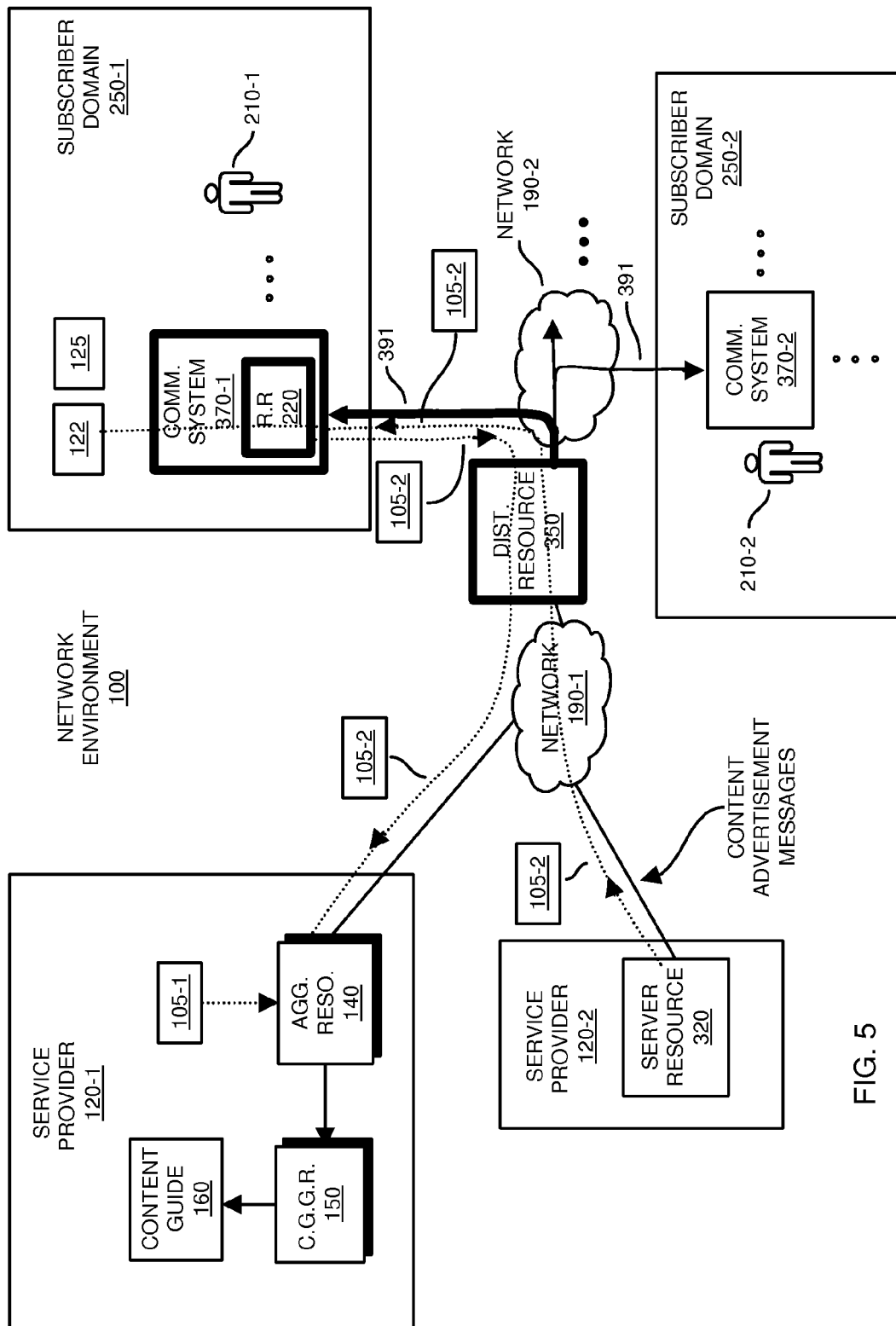


FIG. 5

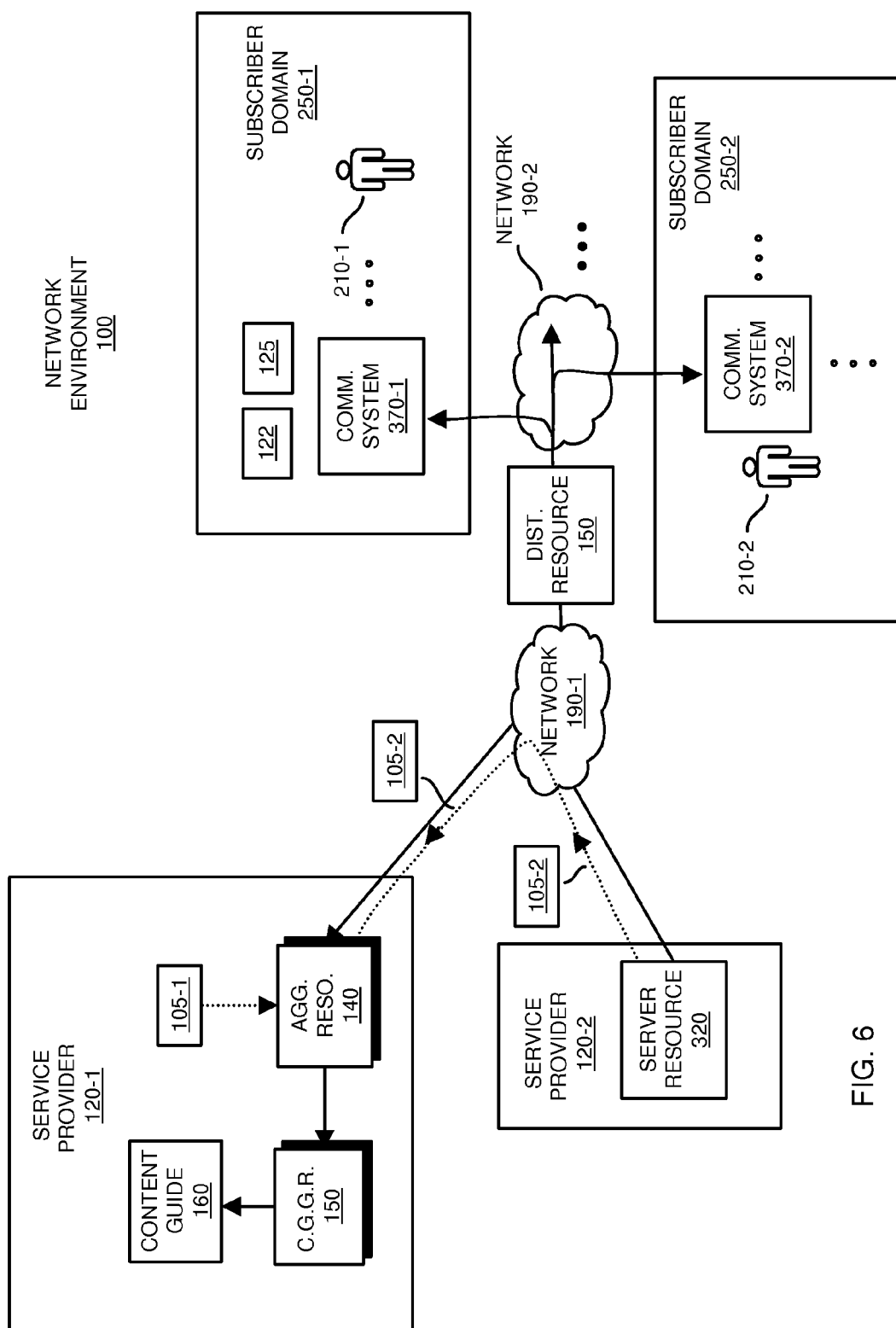


FIG. 6

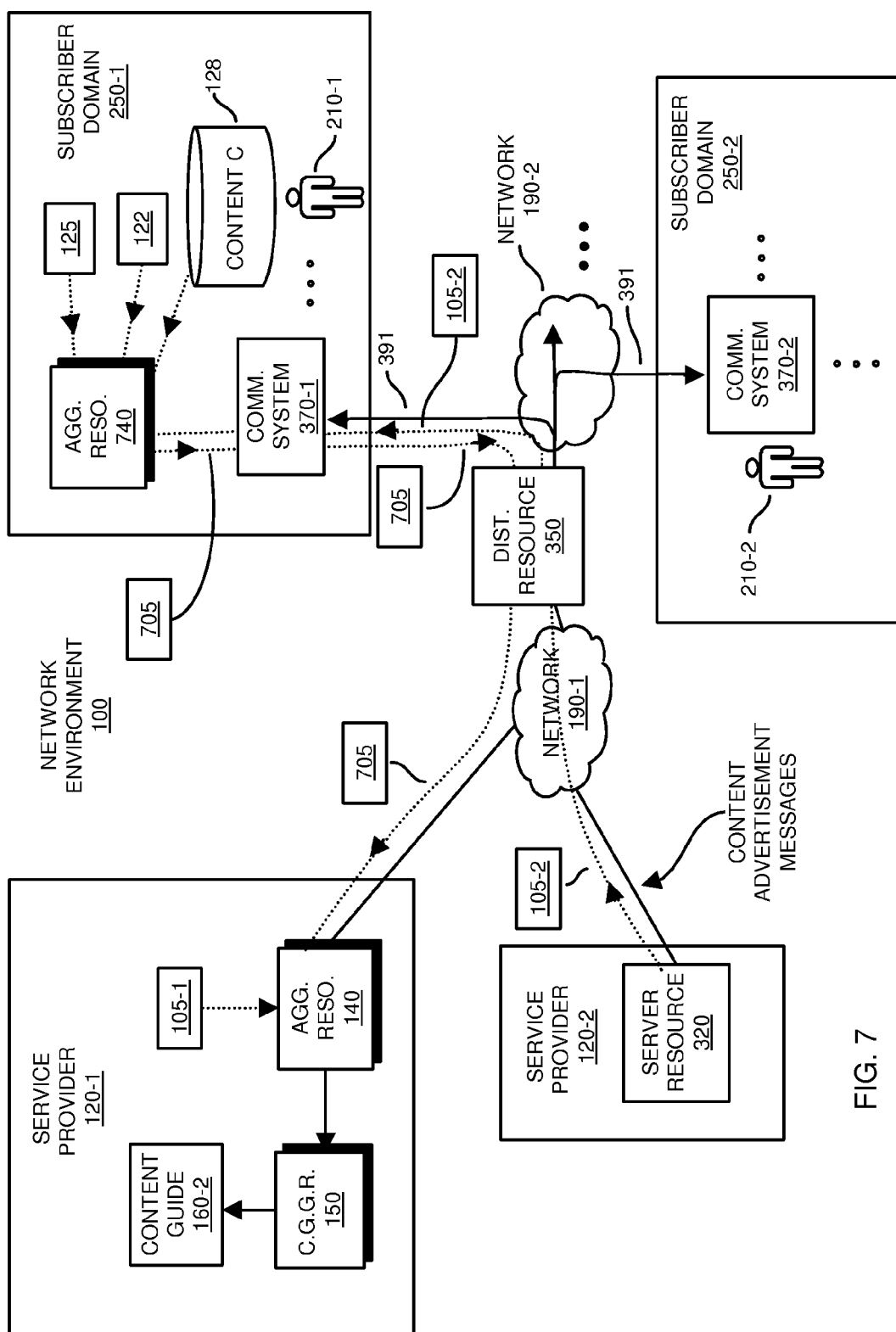


FIG. 7

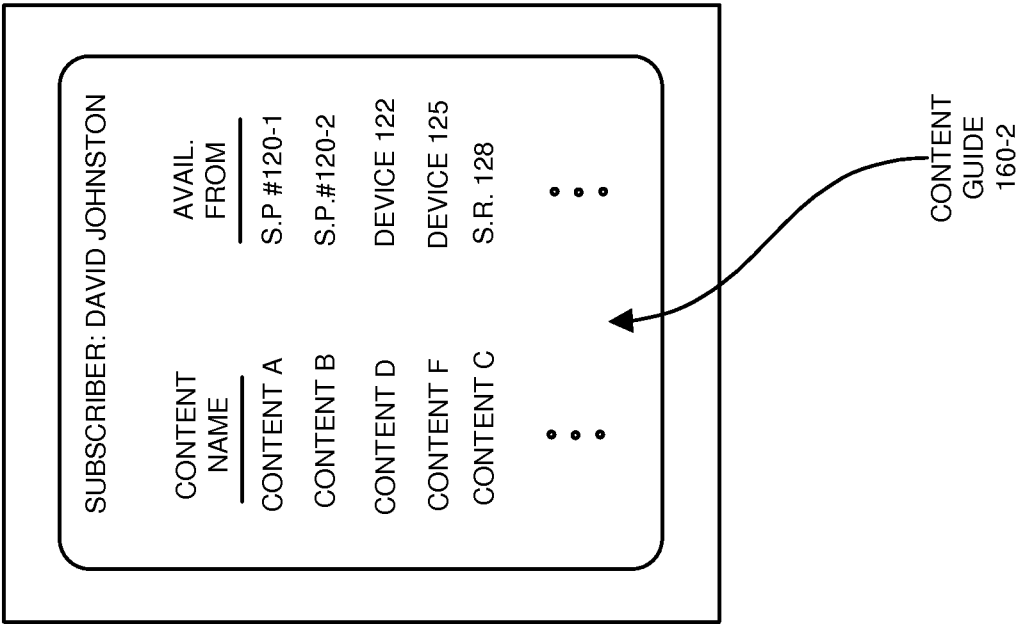


FIG. 8

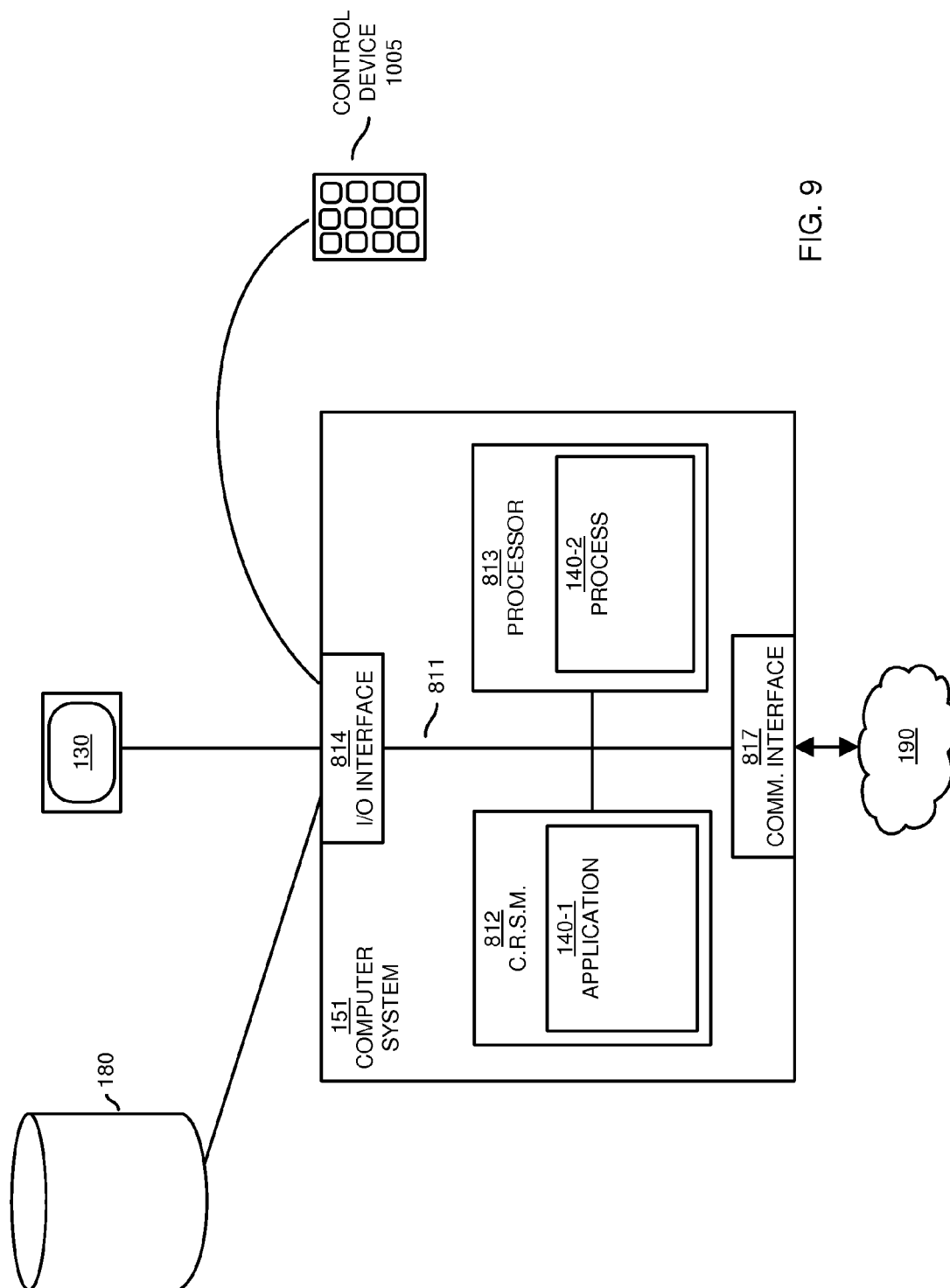


FIG. 9

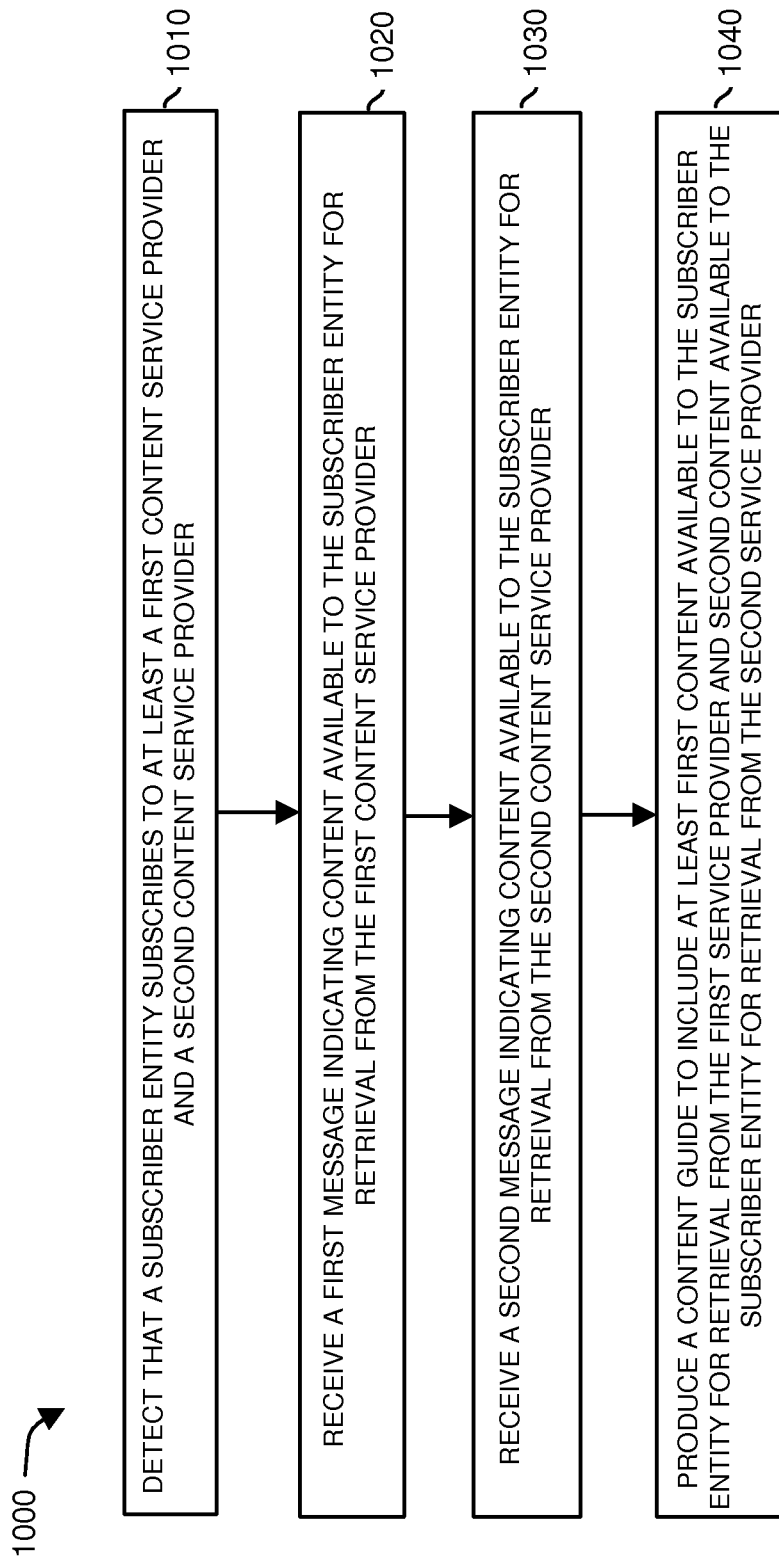


FIG. 10

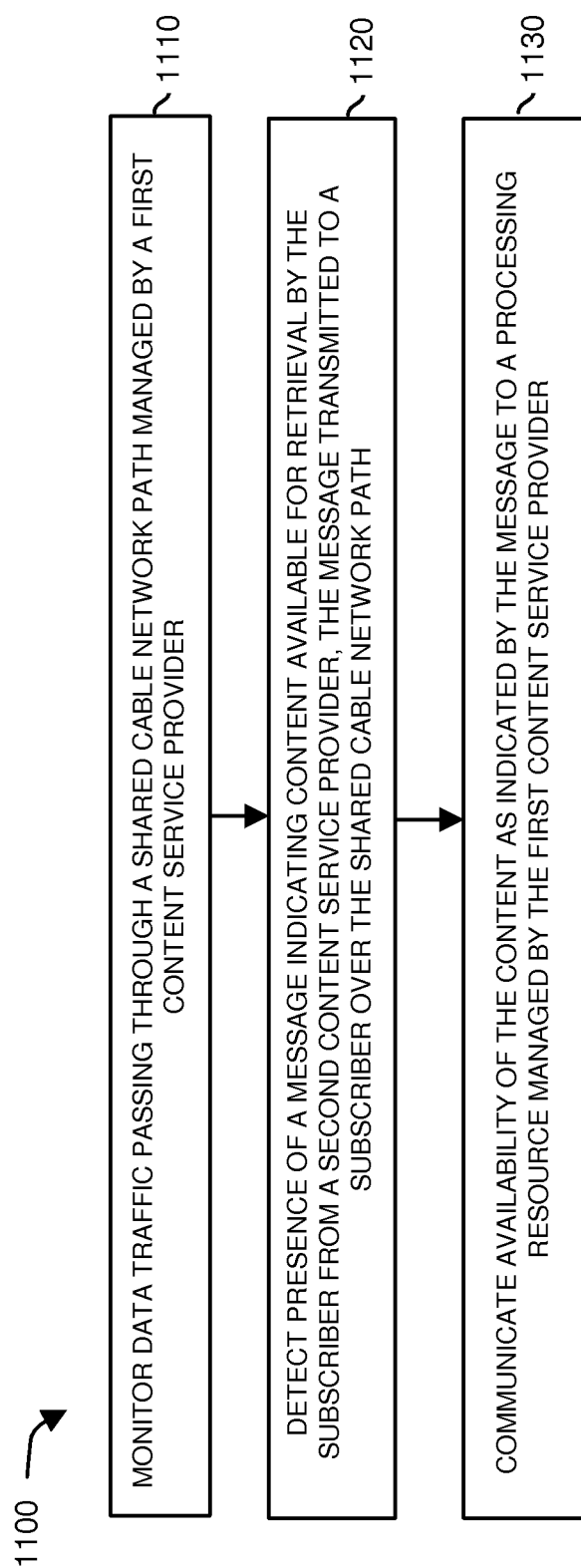


FIG. 11

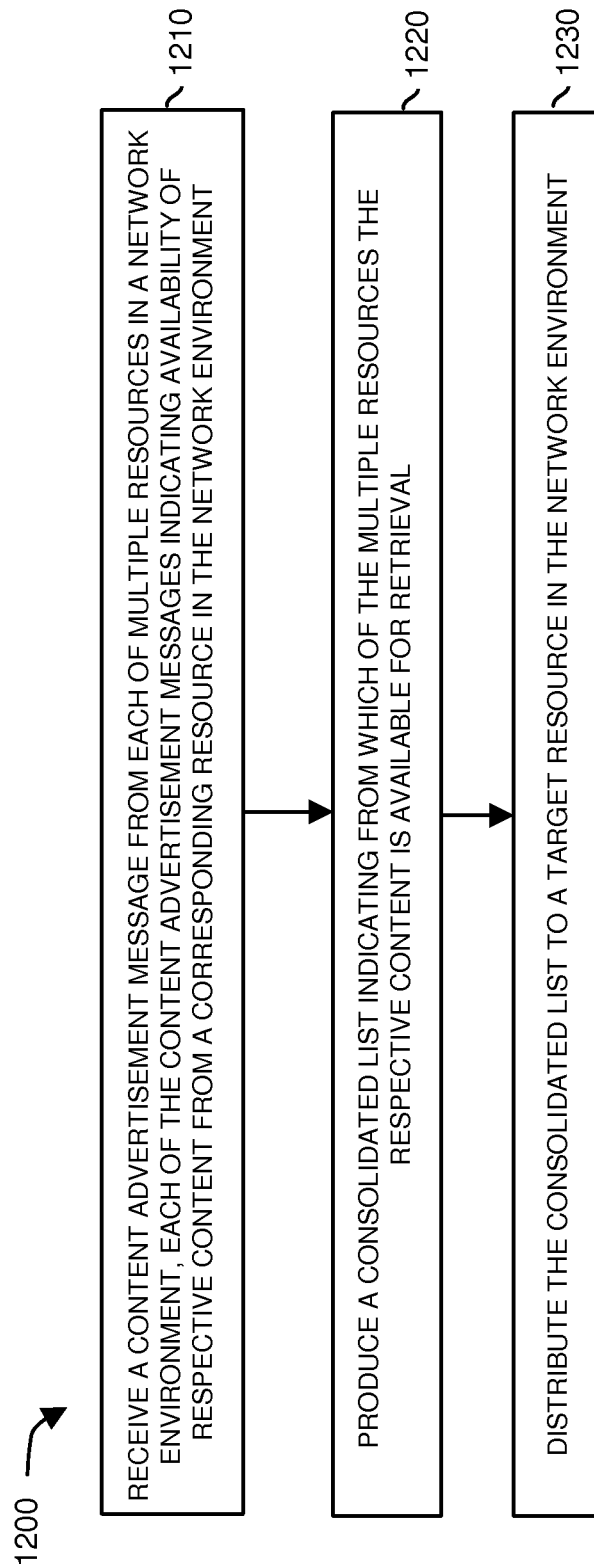


FIG. 12

CONTENT DISCOVERY AND PLAYBACK IN A NETWORK ENVIRONMENT

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation application of earlier filed U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/506,832 entitled "CONTENT DISCOVERY AND PLAYBACK IN A NETWORK ENVIRONMENT," filed on Oct. 6, 2014, the entire teachings of which are incorporated herein by this reference.

U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/506,832 is a continuation application of earlier filed U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/719,719 entitled "CONTENT DISCOVERY AND PLAYBACK IN A NETWORK ENVIRONMENT," filed on Dec. 19, 2012, the entire teachings of which are incorporated herein by this reference.

BACKGROUND

Conventional cable networks often support multiple types of retrieval of content. For example, conventional cable networks typically support retrieval of cable television content via use of a so-called set-top box. In certain instances, an input of the set-top box is typically coupled to a shared cable to receive content from a cable network service provider; an output of the set-top box is coupled to a playback device such as a television display screen. Among other functions, the subscriber controls the set-top box to tune to one or more different available cable channels of content received on the shared cable to play back selected cable channel content on a respective television display screen.

Conventional cable networks also typically support Internet services via use of a so-called cable modem. One port of the cable modem is coupled to the shared cable; another port of the cable modem is coupled to a computer device or gateway device operated in the home environment. The cable modem enables the subscriber operating the computer device to communicate over the shared cable and request retrieval of so-called over-the-top content from any of one or more web servers. In a reverse direction, the cable modem enables the subscriber to receive requested content for playback on the computer device.

One way to notify a respective subscriber of available content is to provide a channel guide. In response to receiving input from the subscriber to view a channel guide of available content, a set-top box initiates display of a cable service provider generated list of available titles of content that are available from the content service provider. In certain instances, such as a guide displaying scheduled linear television content, the user can select from the titles of content available in the channel guide to tune to a respective channel.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Conventional techniques of utilizing content guides suffer from a number of deficiencies. For example, in many instances, as previously discussed, a user must view a standardized content guide produced by a respective service provider to view available content from a particular content service provider. For example, to view titles of corresponding content that is available from a first content service provider such as a cable network service provider, the subscriber relies on use of an in the set-top box to initiate display of the cable network service provider's program guide. To view titles of corresponding content that are

available from a second content service provider (e.g., an over-the-top service provider) such as Netflix™, the subscriber utilizes a second application to initiate display of the second service provider's content guide to view available content. Unfortunately, to view content available from different service providers, the subscriber must switch between operating different devices to view content available from the different service providers.

Embodiments herein deviate with respect to conventional techniques. For example, one embodiment herein is directed to producing a consolidated content guide indicating content available from different service providers. The content guide can include titles of content available for retrieval (via a cable network connection) from a cable network service provider as well as titles of over-the-top content available for retrieval (via an Internet service) from a second service provider to produce a consolidated content guide.

More specifically, in accordance with a first embodiment, a processing resource detects that a subscriber entity subscribes to at least a first content service provider and a second content service provider. The processing resource receives a first message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the first content service provider. The processing resource receives a second message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the second content service provider. Retrieval by the client can include selective retrieval, scheduled retrieval, scheduled to record, scheduled playback, etc. Based on at least the first message and the second message, the processing resource produces a content guide to include at least first content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the first service provider and second content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the second service provider. By way of a non-limiting example, via display of a rendition of the consolidated content guide, a respective subscriber is able to view available content from multiple different service providers.

In one example embodiment, the first content service provider is a cable network service provider; the second content service provider is an over-the-top content service provider. By further way of a non-limiting example, the consolidated content guide indicates first content available for retrieval from the cable network service provider. The consolidated content guide also indicates second content such as over-the-top content available for retrieval from the second content service provider. In one embodiment, the over-the-top content from the second content service provider is available for retrieval from the second content service provider over IP services provided by the first content service provider.

In accordance with another embodiment, a processing resource in a network environment monitors a shared cable network path. The shared cable network path is managed by a first content service provider. Assume that the processing resource detects presence of a message transmitted to a subscriber domain over the shared cable network path. Assume further that the detected message indicates content available for retrieval by the subscriber from the second content service provider. The processing resource communicates availability of the content as indicated by the message to a remotely located processing resource managed by the first content service provider. Accordingly, embodiments herein can include redirecting content advertisement messages (as generated by a second content service provider) to a first content service provider. In one non-limiting example, the term redirect as discussed herein means to transmit a copy of an original message. The original message can be

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forwarded to an originally intended recipient. In another non-limiting example embodiment, the term redirect can mean to transmit the message originally intended to an alternative destination. For example, the original message can be directed to a subscriber. The original message can be rerouted to an alternative source.

In one embodiment, the first content service provider utilizes the content advertisement messages from the second content service provider to produce a consolidated content guide as discussed herein.

In accordance with yet another embodiment, a processing resource is configured to receive a content advertisement message from each of multiple resources in a network environment. Each of the content advertisement messages can indicate availability of respective content from a corresponding resource in the network environment. The processing resource produces a consolidated list indicating from which of the multiple resources the respective content is available for retrieval. The list indicates availability of content from different resources. The processing resource then distributes the consolidated list to a target resource in the network environment.

In one non-limiting example embodiment, the processing resource forwards the consolidated list, which indicates different available content, to a server resource managed by a cable network service provider. The server resource managed by the cable network service provider produces a consolidated content guide to include content as specified by the consolidated list as well as content available from the cable network service provider.

These and other more specific embodiments are disclosed in more detail below.

Any of the resources as discussed herein can include one or more computerized devices, servers, base stations, wireless communication equipment, communication management systems, workstations, handheld or laptop computers, or the like to carry out and/or support any or all of the method operations disclosed herein. In other words, one or more computerized devices or processors can be programmed and/or configured to operate as explained herein to carry out different embodiments of the invention.

Yet other embodiments herein include software programs to perform the steps and operations summarized above and disclosed in detail below. One such embodiment comprises a computer program product including a non-transitory computer-readable storage medium (i.e., any computer readable hardware storage medium) on which software instructions are encoded for subsequent execution. The instructions, when executed in a computerized device having a processor, program and/or cause the processor to perform the operations disclosed herein. Such arrangements are typically provided as software, code, instructions, and/or other data (e.g., data structures) arranged or encoded on a non-transitory computer readable storage medium such as an optical medium (e.g., CD-ROM), floppy disk, hard disk, memory stick, etc., or other a medium such as firmware or shortcode in one or more ROM, RAM, PROM, etc., or as an Application Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC), etc. The software or firmware or other such configurations can be installed onto a computerized device to cause the computerized device to perform the techniques explained herein.

Accordingly, embodiments herein are directed to a method, system, apparatus, computer program product, etc., that supports operations as discussed herein.

One embodiment includes a computer readable storage medium and/or system having instructions stored thereon. The instructions, when executed by a processor of a respec-

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tive computer device, cause the processor or multiple processors of the system to: detect that a subscriber entity subscribes to at least a first content service provider and a second content service provider; receive a first message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for selective retrieval from the first content service provider; receive a second message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for selective retrieval from the second content service provider; and produce a content guide to include at least first content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the first service provider and second content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the second service provider.

Another embodiment as discussed herein includes a computer readable storage medium and/or system having instructions stored thereon. The instructions, when executed by a processor of a respective computer device, cause the processor or multiple processors of the system to: monitor a shared cable network path managed by a first content service provider; detect presence of a message transmitted to a subscriber over the shared cable network path, the message indicating content available for retrieval by the subscriber from the second content service provider; and communicate availability of the content as indicated by the message to a server resource managed by the first content service provider.

Yet another embodiment includes a computer readable storage medium and/or system having instructions stored thereon. The instructions, when executed by a processor of a respective computer device, cause the processor or multiple processors of the system to: receive a content advertisement message from each of multiple resources in a network environment, each of the content advertisement messages indicating availability of respective content from a corresponding resource in the network environment; produce a consolidated list indicating from which of the multiple resources the respective content is available for retrieval; and distribute the consolidated list to a target resource in the network environment.

The ordering of the steps in the above embodiments has been added for clarity sake. Note that any of the processing steps as discussed herein can be performed in any suitable order.

Other embodiments of the present disclosure include software programs and/or respective hardware to perform any of the method embodiment steps and operations summarized above and disclosed in detail below.

It is to be understood that the system, method, apparatus, instructions on computer readable storage media, etc., as discussed herein also can be embodied strictly as a software program, firmware, as a hybrid of software, hardware and/or firmware, hardware alone such as within a processor, within an operating system, within a software application, etc.

Techniques herein are well suited for use in network environments supporting distribution of content from different content service providers. However, it should be noted that embodiments herein are not limited to use in such applications and that the techniques discussed herein are well suited for other applications as well.

Additionally, note that although each of the different features, techniques, configurations, etc., herein may be discussed in different places of this disclosure, it is intended, where suitable, that each of the concepts can optionally be executed independently of each other or in any combination with each other. Accordingly, the one or more present inventions as described herein can be embodied and viewed in many different ways.

Also, note that this preliminary discussion of embodiments herein purposefully does not specify every embodiment and/or incrementally novel aspect of the present disclosure or claimed invention(s). Instead, this brief description only presents general embodiments and corresponding points of novelty over conventional techniques. For additional details and/or possible perspectives (permutations) of the invention(s), the reader is directed to the Detailed Description section and corresponding figures of the present disclosure as further discussed below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an example diagram illustrating aggregation of information and generation of a consolidated content guide according to embodiments herein.

FIG. 2 is an example diagram illustrating redirection of content advertisement messages to create consolidated content guide according to embodiments herein.

FIG. 3 is an example diagram illustrating distribution and use of a consolidated content guide according to embodiments herein.

FIG. 4 is an example diagram illustrating redirection of content advertisement messages to an aggregator resource according to embodiments herein.

FIG. 5 is another example diagram illustrating redirection of content advertisement messages to an aggregator according to embodiments herein.

FIG. 6 is an example diagram illustrating transmission of content availability information to an aggregator resource according to embodiments herein.

FIG. 7 is an example diagram illustrating discovery of content availability information in a subscriber domain of a cable network environment according to embodiments herein.

FIG. 8 is an example diagram illustrating a consolidated content guide indicating availability of content from multiple different resources in a cable network environment according to embodiments herein.

FIG. 9 is a diagram illustrating an example hardware architecture supporting execution of instructions and methods according to embodiments.

FIGS. 10, 11, and 12 are flowcharts illustrating example methods according to embodiments herein.

The foregoing and other objects, features, and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following more particular description of preferred embodiments herein, as illustrated in the accompanying drawings in which like reference characters refer to the same parts throughout the different views. The drawings are not necessarily to scale, with emphasis instead being placed upon illustrating the embodiments, principles, concepts, etc.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As discussed above, by way of a non-limiting example embodiment, a processing resource detects that a subscriber entity subscribes to at least a first content service provider and a second content service provider. The processing resource receives a first message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for selective retrieval from the first content service provider. The processing resource receives a second message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for selective retrieval from the second content service provider. Based on aggregation of at least the first message and the second message, the processing resource produces a consolidated content guide to indicate at least

first content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the first service provider and second content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the second service provider.

Via display of the consolidated content guide, a respective subscriber is able to view content available from multiple service providers. As further described herein, a redirector resource can be used to facilitate forwarding of content availability information to a respective aggregator resource that produces the consolidated content guide.

As discussed herein, embodiments herein include producing a consolidated guide, where a corresponding user can look for a video title and learn all of the different ways they can watch that title. The consolidated content guide can indicate content available from a local hard drive, content available from a networked PC, content available from a cable network environment channel lineup, video on demand, etc. The consolidated content guide can be extended to include VoD (Video on Demand) mechanisms, such as pricing from different sources.

FIG. 1 is an example diagram illustrating aggregation of information and generation of a content guide according to embodiments herein.

One embodiment herein includes a processing resource **135** disposed in network environment **100**. In this example embodiment, processing resource **135** includes an aggregator resource **140** and a content guide generator resource **150**. The aggregator resource **140** and the content guide generator resource **150** can be co-located or located at different locations in network environment **100**.

As its name suggests, content guide generator resource **150** generates a content guide **160** for respective subscriber David Johnston.

In one embodiment, the subscriber David Johnston subscribes to multiple different content retrieval services. For example, assume that David Johnston subscribes to a first content plan in which the subscriber has access to content available from a first content service provider **120-1**. Assume that David Johnston subscribes to a second content plan in which the subscriber has access to content available from a second content service provider **120-2**.

Subscriber information **170** can be configured to indicate information such as the one or more services to which the subscriber subscribes.

In one non-limiting example embodiment, to generate the content guide **160**, the processing resource **135** first determines to which of one or more one or more services a user subscribes. In this example, the processing resource **135** accesses subscriber information **170**. Subscriber information **170** can indicate the different content delivery services (e.g., cable network services, Netflix™, etc.) to which a user subscribes. The subscriber information **170** can be received from any suitable type of resource such as from the subscriber, third parties (e.g., Netflix™), etc. Assume in this example that the processing resource **135** detects that the user (e.g., David Johnston) subscribes to multiple content service providers including first content service provider **120-1** and a second content service provider **120-2**.

The subscriber information **170** can be stored in any suitable resource accessible to the processing resource **135**. In one embodiment, the subscriber provides notification to which of one or more streaming content services the subscriber subscribes. In this example, assume that the subscriber subscribes to both a first content service provider **120-1** and a second content service provider **120-2**.

Further, in this example embodiment, assume that the aggregator resource **140** receives first message information

105-1 (e.g., content availability information) indicating content available to the subscriber David Johnston for selective retrieval from the first content service provider **120-1**.

Assume that the aggregator resource **140** also receives message information **105-2** (e.g., content availability information) indicating content available to the subscriber David Johnston for selective retrieval from the second content service provider **120-2**. As further discussed herein, note that the aggregator resource **140** can passively receive message from other source or the aggregator resource **140** may send out requests for such information. In accordance with one embodiment, the aggregator resource **140** (or other device) in the network environment may generate a query such as "Do you have any content?" or "Do you have the Wizard of Oz?"

The aggregator resource **140** may also receive additional content availability information such as message information **105-3** indicating content available to the subscriber David Johnston for selective retrieval from the storage resource **128** (such as a repository located in a respective subscriber domain).

In this non-limiting example, the message information **105-1** indicates that the subscriber David Johnston is able to access content A from content service provider **120-1**; the message information **105-2** indicates that the subscriber David Johnston is able to access content B from content service provider **120-2**; the message information **105-3** indicates that the subscriber David Johnston is able to access content C from storage resource **128**, and so on.

In a specific non-limiting example embodiment, the aggregator resource **140** processes the message **105-1** to identify at least a first title of corresponding content available for retrieval by the subscriber from the first content service provider **120-1**. The aggregator resource **140** processes the message information **105-2** to identify at least a second title of corresponding content available for retrieval by the subscriber from the second content service provider **120-2**. The aggregator resource **140** processes message information **105-3** from a storage resource **128** located in network environment **100**. In such an embodiment, the content guide generator resource **150** produces the content guide **160** to include the first title (e.g., the movie "Gone With The Wind") of corresponding content A and the second title (e.g., "The Wizard of Oz") of corresponding content B, etc.

In certain instances, the same content can be available from multiple different subscribers. For example, message information **105** can indicate that "Gone with the Wind" is available from both service provider **120-1** and service provider **120-2**. In such an instance, a respective generated content guide **160** would indicate that content A is available from both content service provider **120-1** and content service provider **120-2**.

The content guide generator resource **150** produces the content guide **160** to include a link, reference, etc., to content C such as personal content storage resource **128** in subscriber domain.

Based on the received message information **105-1**, **105-2**, **105-3**, etc., (i.e., content availability information received from one or more different resources) the content guide generator resource **150** produces a content guide **160** to include: i) a title of first content (e.g., content A) available to the subscriber entity (e.g., David Johnston) for retrieval from the first service provider **120-1**, ii) a title of second content (e.g., content B) available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the second service provider **120-2**, iii) a title of third content (e.g., content C) available to the subscriber

entity for retrieval from the storage resource **128** (e.g., a storage resource located in a subscriber domain), etc.

Thus, content guide **160** can indicate availability of locally or remotely stored content available accessible by the subscriber David Johnston.

If desired, the content guide **160** as produced by the content guide generator resource **150** can provide an indication from which location, device, resource, etc., and/or which content service provider respective content is available. For example, as shown, the content guide generator resource **150** can produce the content guide **160** to include an indication that content A is available for retrieval from the first content service provider **120-1**. The content guide generator resource **150** can generate the content guide **160** to include an indication that the content B is available for retrieval from the second content service provider **120-2**. The content guide generator resource **150** can generate the content guide **160** to include an indication that the content C is available for retrieval from respective storage resource **128** in the home network environment or subscriber domain in which the subscriber resides, and so on.

As discussed below in more detail, the content guide generator resource **150** can produce the content guide **160** to include further information such as the cost associated with retrieval of respective content from the different content service providers, different levels of quality available for viewing the respective content, when the content is available for viewing, a name of a respective resource that stores the content, a location of the content, etc.

FIG. 2 is an example diagram illustrating redirection of content advertisement messages according to embodiments herein.

As shown, content service provider **120-2** can be configured to generate message information **105-2** including information about content available for retrieval by the subscriber **210-1** (e.g., David Johnston) residing in subscriber domain **250-1**.

In one embodiment, network environment **100** includes a redirector resource **220**. By way of a non-limiting example, redirector resource **220** can be configured to monitor data traffic (e.g., messages, data packets, content availability information, etc.) passing through a shared cable network path managed by the first content service provider **120-1**.

Based on the monitoring, assume that the redirector resource **220** detects presence of message information **105-2** transmitted to subscriber **210-1** over the shared cable network path. Assume also that the redirector resource **220** processes the message information **105-2** and detects that the message information **105-2** indicates content available for retrieval by the subscriber **210-1** from a second content service provider **120-2**.

In one embodiment, the message information **105-2** represents one or more content advertisement messages transmitted in or across multiple networks. In one embodiment, the content service provider **120-2** generates the content advertisement messages to indicate availability of content. The content advertisement messages can indicate titles of available content, formatting of the available content, etc.

The redirector resource **220** may allow further transmission of the message information **105-2** to a target device in subscriber domain **250-1** as originally intended by the content service provider **120-2**. In other words, the redirector resource **220** can be configured to intercept message information **105-2**, process the received message information **105-2** to learn that the message information **105-2** is a content advertisement message indicating availability of content from redirector resource **220**, and transmits or

redirects at least a copy of the message information **105-2** indicating the available content to aggregator resource **140**. The redirector resource **220** can be configured to forward the original message to a target recipient in subscriber domain **250-1**.

Thus, embodiments herein can include copying the message information **105-2** and transmitting the copied message information **105-2** to the processing resource **135** managed by the first content service provider **120-1**.

In this or any other suitable manner, the aggregator resource **140** communicates availability of the content as indicated by the message information **105-2** to processing resource **135** managed by the first content service provider **120-1**. In a manner as previously discussed, the processing resource **135** produces content guide **160**, which is made available to subscriber **210-1** for viewing.

As mentioned, the processing resource **135** (and corresponding components aggregator resource **140** and/or content guide generator resource **150**) managed by the first content service provider **120-1** produces the content guide **160** to indicate a combination of the content available to the subscriber **210-1** for retrieval from the second service provider **120-2** as specified by the message information **105-2** and content available to the subscriber **210-1** for retrieval from the first content service provider **120-1** over a shared cable network path.

More specifically, as discussed in more detail later in this specification, the first content service provider **120-1** may be a cable network service provider. In such an instance, the cable network service provider may enable the subscriber **210-1** to selectively retrieve and/or tune to cable network content such as television programs, video on demand, etc.

The cable network service provider (such as the first content service provider **120-1**) may also provide Internet services or other similar network services to the subscriber **210-1** enabling the respective subscriber **210-1** to retrieve so-called over-the-top content from content service provider **120-2** over the Internet. In such an instance, the generation and distribution of content guide **160** enables the subscriber **210-1** to view a combination of content available from the cable network service provider and the second content service provider **120-2** that makes the over-the-top content (such as 3rd party content from Hulu™, Netflix™, Amazon™, etc.) available over the Internet.

According to conventional techniques, each 3rd party content service provider can offer only a single guide indicating content available from the service provider the corresponding subscriber. The guide information typically must be retrieved from a dedicated web site managed by the content service provider. In contrast to conventional techniques, embodiments herein include combining content availability information into a consolidated content guide **160**.

As previously mentioned, the message information **105-2** can be or include content advertisement messages or advertisements generated by the content service provider **120-2** to indicate availability of content from the content service provider **120-2**. In one embodiment, the content advertisement messages are transmitted on a regular basis to continuously notify the subscriber **210-1** of the content available to the subscriber **210-1**.

Additional and more specific embodiments of redirecting content advertisement messages are described below in FIGS. 4, 5, and 6.

FIG. 3 is an example diagram illustrating distribution and use of a content guide according to embodiments herein.

As shown, network environment **100** includes server resource **640-1**. Server resource **640-1** can be a cloud server or other cable network equipment configured to distribute content A (such as cable network type content) over cable network resources **690-1** to distribution resource **350**. By way of a non-limiting example, the distribution resource **350** can be and/or include a gateway resource, customer edge router, cable modem termination system, etc. Distribution resource **350** distributes content available from service provider **120-1** over bandwidth in shared communication link **391** in network **190-2**.

In one embodiment, the bandwidth in shared communication link **391** is allocated into at least a first portion and a second portion. The first portion of bandwidth capacity in the shared communication link **391** can support IP data packet traffic in which data is delivered based on network addresses. Devices in the cable network environment that use the shared communication link are assigned appropriate network addresses to send and receive data. The second portion of bandwidth capacity can support QAM (Quadrature Amplitude Modulated) data transmissions in which content is modulated onto and transmitted over one or more carrier frequency in the shared communication link **391**. A respective subscriber tunes to a QAM channel to retrieve content over the second bandwidth.

In one embodiment, note that the subscriber is not limited to receiving content from service provider **120-1** over QAM channels. For example, the subscriber **210-1** can initiate retrieval of content from the first content service provider **120-1** via either tuning to appropriate QAM channels and/or receiving the content as IP data packets depending which mode content is made available for retrieval by a respective content service provider.

In accordance with further embodiments, the subscriber can retrieve content B from the content service provider **120-2** as IP data packets.

By further way of a non-limiting example, shared communication link **391** can be any suitable type of physical or non-physical resource (e.g., communication link, bandwidth, logical channel, coaxial cable, wireless, fiber optic link, etc.) that provides connectivity between distribution resource **350** and each of multiple subscriber domains **250** (e.g., subscriber domain **250-1**, subscriber domain **250-2**, etc.).

As mentioned, shared communication link **391** enables each of multiple subscribers **210** (e.g., subscriber **210-1**, subscriber **210-2**, etc.) in a respective service group to share bandwidth on a communication link and retrieve content from different sources. For example, the subscribers **210** can tune a respective communication device to play back content from received from content service provider **120-1**. Content A can be content such as scheduled cable television programs, video on demand programs, etc., available to each of the subscribers **210** that shares use of communication link **391** and that subscribe to services provided by content service provider **120-1**.

As previously discussed, in addition to subscribing to cable network services and corresponding content, each of the subscribers **210** can subscribe to Internet services (such as over-the-top services) available from content service provider **120-1**. Via the Internet services, and use of a portion of bandwidth in the shared communication link **391**, each of the subscribers can initiate retrieval of over-the-top content from one or more content service providers such as service provider **120-2** for playback in a respective subscriber domain. In other words, as discussed herein, the subscriber **210-1** can initiate retrieval of over-the-top con-

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tent from service provider **120-2** using Internet services provided by service provider **120-1**.

Thus, first content such as content A can be available to the subscribers over a first portion of bandwidth (such as QAM channels) on the shared communication link **391**. Second content such as content B from a second content service provider **120-2** can be available to the subscribers over a second portion of bandwidth (such as bandwidth that supports IP type services) on the shared communication link **391**.

In this example embodiment, the subscriber **210-1** retrieves content guide **160** for viewing on a respective display screen. The content guide **160** can be retrieved from the content service provider **120-1** in any suitable manner. For example, in one non-limiting example embodiment, the consolidated content guide **160** can be retrieved by the subscriber **210-1** from a web page.

Via the content guide **160**, the subscriber **210-1** is able to view content available from both content service providers **120-1** and **120-2**.

In certain instances, a portion of the content available from the different content service providers is the same. In such an instance, the content can be retrieved from each of the content service providers. The same content may be available in different formats. For example, one version of content may allow playback without commercials, another version of the content may allow playback of content without commercials, or different aspect ratios, display resolutions, CODECS, formatting, etc.

For cases in which the same content is available from multiple different service providers, the content guide generator resource **150** can generate content guide **160** to indicate pricing information so that the subscriber **210-1** is able to determine how much the content would cost to retrieve from the different resources.

As a more specific example, the content guide **160** can indicate that the movie "Gone With The Wind" is available for consumption from both content service provider **120-1** and content service provider **120-2**. The content guide **160** can indicate that the movie "Gone With The Wind" can be rented for viewing from the content service provider **120-1** for \$3.99. The content guide **160** can indicate that the movie "Gone With The Wind" can be rented for viewing from the content service provider **120-2** for \$7.99. In this example embodiment, via the content guide **160**, the subscriber **210-1** can determine which of the content service providers to retrieve and view respective content (e.g., "Gone With The Wind").

In further embodiments, the subscriber **210-1** generates a request to retrieve and view content guide **160**. As mentioned, content guide **160** can be retrieved in any suitable manner.

For example, the subscriber **210-1** can be configured to generate a request to retrieve the content guide **160** from a web site over the Internet. In accordance with further embodiments, the subscriber **210-1** can initiate retrieval of the content guide **160** via inputting an appropriate command to a set-top box that initiates retrieval and subsequent display of the content guide **160** on a respective display screen driven by the set-top box.

In accordance with another embodiment, the subscriber can initiate retrieval of the content guide **160** via a browser executing on a computer device. The browser can be located in a media player application to retrieve and playback all or a portion of the available content specified in the content guide. By way of a non-limiting example, the content can be

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retrieved from a respective server resource in accordance with the HTML 5 (HyperText Markup Language 5) protocol.

Thus, embodiments herein can include: in response to receiving a request from the subscriber entity to view content guide **160**, the content service provider **120-1** initiates distribution of the content guide **160** for viewing by the subscriber **210-1**.

Further embodiments herein can include receiving selection of content displayed in the content guide **160** and initiating display of the selected content. As an example, the content service provider **120-1** can receive selection (by the subscriber **210-1**) of a particular title of content displayed in a rendition of the content guide **160** displayed on a respective display device in the subscriber domain **250-1**. In response to the selection, the corresponding processing device (e.g., set-top box, computer device, etc.) receives the selection and initiates retrieval of the selected content from the appropriate resource. The target resource storing the requested content receives the selection and initiates retrieval and distribution of the selected content to the subscriber entity.

As a more specific example, assume that the subscriber **210-1** selects content A for viewing via a service such as video on demand offered by the content service provider **120-1**. The server resource **640-1** operated by content service provider **120-1** receives the command from subscriber **210-1** and responds to the request by retrieving and distributing requested content A over network **690-1** to distribution resource **350**. Distribution resource **350** transmits content A over shared communication link **391** to a respective device operated by subscriber **210-1** for playback.

Assume that the subscriber **210-1** selects content B for viewing. In one embodiment, the device operated by the subscriber to view the content guide **160** launches an appropriate application to retrieve respective content B as streaming content from the second content service provider **120-2**. After providing appropriate subscriber identity and authorization information to the content service provider **120-2**, to retrieve content, the subscriber generates a request for content B over the Internet service (as provided by content service provider **120-1**) to server resource **640-2** managed by content service provider **120-2**. In response to the request for content B, the server resource **640-2** responds to the request by retrieving and distributing requested content B over network **190-1** via distribution resource **350** using an appropriate Internet Protocol and to a network address of the requesting playback device operated by the subscriber **210-1**. Distribution resource **350** participates in transmission of content B as over-the-top content over shared communication link **391** to a respective device operated by subscriber **210-1** for playback.

In this manner, via an appropriate target network address of the playback device in subscriber domain **250-1**, the server resource **640-2** is able to transmit content B to a respective device operated by subscriber **210-1** for storage and/or subsequent playback.

In accordance with further embodiments, note that the content available from the content service provider **120-1** also can be available as so-called IPTV (Internet Protocol Television) as opposed to a QAM channel. In such an instance, the available content A displayed in a rendition of the content guide **160** can be associated with a respective network address (or multiple network addresses) indicating a respective resource (e.g., server resource **640-1**) from which the respective content A can be retrieved. In response to receiving selection of a title (e.g., reference) of content A

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displayed in the rendition of the content guide **160**, a respective device in the subscriber domain **250-1** initiates IP communications with the server resource **640-1** to retrieve content A for playback.

As previously discussed, the available content B displayed in the content guide **160** can be associated with a respective network address (or multiple network addresses) indicating a respective resource (e.g., server resource **640-2**) from which the respective content B can be retrieved. In a similar manner as previously discussed, in response to receiving selection of content B displayed in the rendition of the content guide **160**, a respective device in the subscriber domain **250-1** initiates communications with the server resource **640-2** to retrieve content B for playback.

Note that there are instances in which the content guide **160** can include an extensive listing of titles of content that are retrievable from multiple different resources in network environment **100**. The list of available content may be too large to simultaneously display all available titles of content on the display screen. One embodiment herein includes a search function supporting search capability. The search function can be configured to execute on the device operated by the subscriber **210-1**. In response to receiving search criteria from the subscriber to find, for example, a specific title of content, the search function searches the content guide **160** for availability of content as specified by the search criteria.

In one non-limiting example embodiment, assume that particular content satisfying the search is available from both the first content service provider **120-1** and the second content service provider **120-2**. In response to detecting that the content as specified by the search criteria is available from both the first content service provider **120-1** and the second content service provider **120-2**, the search function initiates display of an appropriate message to the subscriber **210-1** notifying the subscriber that the content as specified by the search criteria is available from both the first content service provider and the second content service provider. Notification can include updating a display of the content guide **160** on a respective display screen to indicate the content that satisfies the search criteria.

In similar manner as previously discussed, a display function can be configured to initiate display of pricing information to indicate the cost of renting (i.e., retrieving and viewing) the title of content from each of multiple different content service providers. Accordingly, a subscriber can make an informed decision as to which content service provider to retrieve the respective content.

In one embodiment, the subscriber domain includes communication device **122** (e.g., a first client) and communication device **125** (e.g., a second client). Each of the communication devices can include a respective media player application to play back retrieved content. As previously discussed, the subscriber **210-1** can initiate display of content guide **160** on a respective communication device. Each respective communication device can retrieve content B from server resource **640-2** via generation of one or more content requests (such as HTTP (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol) requests) to server resource **640-2**.

FIGS. 4, 5, and 6 illustrate multiple example ways in which to redirect messages to an aggregator resource according to embodiments herein.

Conventional service discovery is generally done in the home today by way of service advertisements. Examples of conventional discovery can be done via mDNS protocol, Microsoft's LLNMP, and the neutral DLNA, etc. Embodiments herein can include extending one or more of these

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protocols to allow them to traverse a home network with multiple hierarchies of networks. For example, the extended protocol as discussed herein can be configured to support distribution of content advertisement messages to advertise the availability of different content from different resources across networks in the hierarchy. Such methods may require devices such as routers in each network to be aware of and support a content availability protocol supporting advertisements of available content.

In one embodiment, when a cable network-owned router (such as a home gateway, CMTS, or IP-capable set top, etc., managed by the first content service provider **120-1**) receives content advertisement message (i.e., messages indicating availability of content), the device relays those messages to a cable network server, which consolidates the information with the cable network's own available content and services, and present them in content guide **160** to the user.

In accordance with other embodiments, the first content service provider **120-1** can be configured to send titles and metadata to the gateway in the home, which could participate in the content discovery process and produce the content guide **160**.

More specifically, FIG. 4 is an example diagram illustrating redirection of content discovery messages to an aggregator resource in a cable network environment according to embodiments herein.

In this example, content service provider **120-2** manages (e.g., owns, operates, controls, etc.) server resource **320**. In one embodiment, server resource **320** produces message information **105-2** (e.g., content availability information). The message information **105-2** can include appropriate network addresses to direct and/or transmit it to a personal network or devices in subscriber domain **250-1**.

In one embodiment, any of one or more of the communications between parties can be performed over a secured link such as a virtual private network, a tunnel, etc.

In one embodiment, the content service provider **120-2** transmits message information **105-2** (e.g., one or more content advertisement messages indicating content available from server resource **320**) to one or more computer devices subscriber domain **250-1**. The server resource **320** (as controlled by content service provider **120-2**) can transmit the message information **105-2** over an Internet service (subscribed to by the subscriber **210-1**) and provide it to devices **122** and **125** by content service provider **120-1**.

Because the content service provider **120-1** controls at least a portion of network environment **100**, the content service provider **120-1** has the ability to execute a redirector resource **220** (such as executed switch to detect content advertisement messages) in any suitable location along a network path between the distribution resource **350** (e.g., a CMTS, edge router, etc.) and the communication system **370-1** (e.g., a cable modem, home edge router, home gateway, etc.). Each of one or more different computer devices such as communication devices **122** and **125** can receive and transmit communications through communication system **370-1** to remote resources in network environment **100**.

As previously discussed, the redirector resource **220** can be configured to monitor data traffic (e.g., messages, data packets, etc.) passing through a shared cable network path managed by the first content service provider **120-1**. In this example embodiment, the distribution resource **350** executes the redirector resource **220** to monitor data traffic.

Based on the monitoring, assume that the redirector resource **220** detects presence of message information **105-2** transmitted to a device in subscriber domain **250-1**. The

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redirector resource **220** can be configured to analyze the respective data traffic to subscriber **210-1** for specific messages such as messages indicating available content from a content service provider such as content service provider **120-1**.

One way to detect presence of content availability message information passing through distribution resource **350** is to identify a respective network address associated with subscriber domain **250-1** and monitor any traffic passing through distribution resource **350** that has the address of the subscriber domain **250-1**.

In addition to or as an alternative to monitoring data traffic based on network addresses, the redirector resource **220** also can be configured to process the communications to subscriber domain **250-1** to determine which of the messages includes content availability information.

In response to detecting that traffic through the distribution resource **350** is targeted to the subscriber domain **250-1** and/or is an advertisement message indicating availability of content, the redirector resource **220** transmits at least a copy of the message information **105-1** to the aggregator resource **140**.

In one embodiment, the redirector resource uses a network address of the aggregator resource **140** to forward the message information **105-2** over network **190-1** to the aggregator resource **140**.

In a manner as previously discussed, the aggregator resource **140** combines content availability information received from content service provider **120-2** and content service provider **120-1**. For example, the aggregator resource **140** receives message **105-1** from the first content service provider **120-1**. The aggregator resource **140** receives the second message information **105-2** indicating availability of the content from the content service provider **120-2** as a redirect message from the redirector resource **220**.

In a manner as previously discussed, based on the combined content availability information from multiple sources, the content guide generator resource **150** produces the content guide **160**.

FIG. **5** is an example diagram illustrating redirection of content advertisement messages to an aggregator according to embodiments herein.

As previously discussed, the redirector resource **220** can be located in any suitable location in network environment **100**. As shown in this example embodiment, the redirector resource **220** resides in communication system **370-1** such as a cable modem, video gateway, or home gateway resource disposed in subscriber domain **250-1**.

As previously discussed, the server resource **320** can be configured to transmit one or more content advertisement messages to subscriber domain **250-1**. For example, the server resource **320** can send to a device or appliance such as communication device **122**, communication device **125**, etc. Each of the communication devices can then send or distribute the content advertisement messages to one or more other resources in subscriber domain **250-1**.

In one embodiment, the redirector resource **220** in communication system **370-1** monitors communications received over the network path to subscriber **210-1**. As previously discussed, monitoring the network path can include processing the messages transmitted over the shared cable network path to identify a set of at least one message transmitted to the subscriber domain **250-1** (or corresponding devices therein). In response to detecting presence of one or more content advertisement messages indicating availability of content, the redirector resource **220** redirects at

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least a copy of the corresponding message information **105-2** to aggregator resource **140**.

In a manner as previously discussed, the aggregator resource **140** combines content availability information received from content service provider **120-2** and content service provider **120-1**. For example, the aggregator resource **140** receives message information **105-1** from a resource managed by the first content service provider **120-1**. The aggregator resource **140** also receives the second message information **105-2** (as a redirect message) from redirector resource **220**. The message information **105-2** indicates availability of the content from the content service provider **120-2**.

FIG. **6** is an example diagram illustrating transmission of message information indicating available content according to embodiments herein.

In this example embodiment, the aggregator resource **140** receives message information **105-2** directly from server resource **320** managed by content service provider **120-2**.

In accordance with such an embodiment, the aggregator resource **140** (managed by content service provider **120-1**) receives notification indicating that the subscriber **210-1** subscribes to content service provider **120-2**. The aggregator resource **140** receives the message information **105-2** in any suitable manner. For example, in one embodiment, the aggregator resource **140** generates a request for content availability information from server resource **320** (on behalf of the subscriber **210-1**) to learn of content available to the subscriber **210-1** from the content service provider **120-2**. The aggregator resource **140** may provide identity and authorization information associated with the subscriber **210-1** to retrieve the content availability information. In response to the query, the aggregator resource **140** forwards the request to a network address assigned to the server resource **320**. In response to the request, the server resource **320** forwards message information **105-2** to aggregator resource **140**. Accordingly, the aggregator resource **140** can “pull” information from the server resource **320**.

Note that the server resource **320** can be configured to automatically “push” the message information **105-2** to the aggregator resource **140**. For example, a temporary or continuous communication session can exist between the aggregator resource **140** and the server resource **320**. The server resource **320** can be configured to automatically transmit message information messages **105-2** such as one or more content advertisement messages to the aggregator resource **140** to notify aggregator resource **140** of the content that is available to subscriber **210-1**.

In a manner as previously discussed, the aggregator resource **140** combines content availability information received from at least content service provider **120-2** and content service provider **120-1**. The content guide generator resource **150** produces content guide **160** indicating content available to subscriber **210-1** from different service providers.

FIG. **7** is an example diagram illustrating discovery of content in a network according to embodiments herein.

As previously discussed, the aggregator resource **140** as discussed herein can be disposed at any location in network environment **100** to learn of availability of content from each of different resources.

In this example embodiment as shown in FIG. **7**, an aggregator resource **740** is located in a home network environment such as in subscriber domain **250-1**. The home network environment can include a hierarchy of network segments interconnecting computer devices. As previously discussed, each of one or more devices in subscriber domain can be configured to generate one or more content adver-

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tisement messages (e.g., broadcast message, targeted message, etc.) to indicate availability of respective content. The content advertisement messages can be transmitted across network segments from one device in the subscriber domain 250-1 to another.

For example, assume that: communication device 125 generates one or more content advertisement messages to indicate that content F is available for retrieval from communication device 125 by the subscriber 210-1; communication device 122 generates one or more content advertisement to indicate that content D is available for retrieval by the subscriber 210-1; storage resource 128 generates one or more content advertisement messages to indicate that content C is available for retrieval by the subscriber 210-1; server resource 320 generates one or more content advertisement messages to indicate that content B is available for retrieval from content service provider 120-2 (or server resource 640-2); and so on.

In one embodiment as shown, the aggregator resource 740 located in subscriber domain 250-1 aggregates the content advertisement messages and forwards such information as content availability information 705 to aggregator resource 140. As previously discussed, aggregator resource 140 combines content availability information 705 with content availability information as indicated by message information 105-1 to produce content guide 160-2.

In a further embodiment, if desired, note that the aggregator resource 740 can be configured to also receive message information 105-1 from the content service provider 120-1 as opposed to aggregator resource 140 receiving message information 105-1. In such an instance, the aggregator resource 740 can be configured to forward the combination of all content availability information to content guide generator resource 150 to produce content guide 160-2.

As previously discussed, the content guide generator resource 150 can be located at any suitable location in network environment 100. In one embodiment, the content guide generator resource 150 can be located in subscriber domain 250-1. In such an instance, the aggregator resource 740 would forward the content availability information 705 to the content guide generator resource 150 located in subscriber domain 250-1 to produce content guide 160-2.

Note that a subscriber 210-1 need not be located in the subscriber domain 250-1 to retrieve available content. For example, the subscriber 210-1 can operate a computer device in a coffee shop having public WiFi™ access. Via a connection over a public WiFi™, the subscriber 210-1 is able to access a web page made available by the first content service provider 120-1. Via the web page access, the subscriber 210-1 can retrieve and view the content guide 160-2 and retrieve content for playback. In one embodiment, the subscriber 210-1 may select content stored in a respective set-top box to playback in the computer device operated in the coffee shop. In such an instance, the content service provider 120-1 initiates retrieval and forwarding of the content stored in the respective set-top box to the computer device operated by the subscriber 210-1 in the coffee shop over the WiFi™ connection.

In accordance with further embodiments, the aggregator resource can be located in a set-top box in subscriber domain 250-1. In such an instance, the set-top box can be configured to forward any collected content availability information to a respective content guide generator resource 150 disposed in the cloud (i.e., network).

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FIG. 8 is an example diagram illustrating a content guide indicating availability of content from multiple resources according to embodiments herein.

As previously discussed in FIG. 7, the content guide generator resource 150 produces content guide 160-2 based on received content availability information. In this example embodiment, as indicated by the content guide 160-2, the subscriber 210-1 is able to retrieve content A from service provider 120-1 (or a specific server resource such as server resource 640-1); the subscriber is able to retrieve content B from service provider 120-2 (or a specific server resource such as server resource 640-2); the subscriber is able to retrieve content D from device 122 in the subscriber domain 250-1; the subscriber is able to retrieve content F from device 125 in the subscriber domain 250-1; the subscriber is able to retrieve content C from storage device 128 (e.g., a repository) in the subscriber domain 250-1; and so on.

FIG. 9 is an example block diagram of a computer system for implementing any of the operations as discussed herein according to embodiments herein.

Computer system 151 can reside anywhere in network environment 100 and support any of the operations as discussed herein. In one embodiment, the computer system 151 executes application 140-1 to facilitate aggregation or redirection of content availability information to produce a consolidated content guide.

As shown, computer system 151 of the present example can include an interconnect 811 that couples computer readable storage media 812 such as a non-transitory type of media (i.e., any type of hardware storage medium) in which digital information can be stored and retrieved, a processor 813, I/O interface 814, and a communications interface 817.

I/O interface 814 provides connectivity to a repository 180 and, if present, other devices such as a display screen 930, keypad control device 1005, a computer mouse, etc.

Computer readable storage medium 812 can be any hardware storage device such as memory, optical storage, hard drive, floppy disk, etc. In one embodiment, the computer readable storage medium 812 stores instructions and/or data.

Communications interface 817 enables the computer system 150 and processor 813 to communicate over a resource such as network 190 to retrieve information from remote sources and communicate with other computers. I/O interface 814 enables processor 813 to retrieve information stored in repository 180.

As shown, computer readable storage media 812 is encoded with admission control application 140-1 (e.g., software, firmware, etc.) executed by processor 813. Admission control application 140-1 (e.g., encoder application) can be configured to include instructions to implement any of the operations as discussed herein.

During operation of one embodiment, processor 813 (e.g., one or more processor devices) accesses computer readable storage media 812 via the use of interconnect 811 in order to launch, run, execute, interpret or otherwise perform the instructions in application 140-1 stored on computer readable storage medium 812.

Execution of the application 140-1 produces processing functionality such as process 140-2 in processor 813. In other words, the process 140-2 (e.g., redirection, aggregation, content guide generation, etc.) associated with processor 813 represents one or more aspects of executing application 140-1 (e.g., functions supported by aggregator resource 140, redirector resource 220, content guide generator resource 150, etc.) within or upon the processor 813 in the computer system 150.

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Those skilled in the art will understand that the computer system **151** can include other processes and/or software and hardware components, such as an operating system that controls allocation and use of hardware resources to execute application **140-1**.

In accordance with different embodiments, note that computer system may be any of various types of devices, including, but not limited to, a server resource, a personal computer system, a wireless device, base station, phone device, desktop computer, laptop, notebook, netbook computer, mainframe computer system, handheld computer, workstation, network computer, application server, storage device, a consumer electronics device such as a camera, camcorder, set top box, mobile device, video game console, handheld video game device, a peripheral device such as a switch, modem, router, or in general any type of computing or electronic device. The computer system **150** may reside at any location or can be included in any suitable resource in network environment **100** to implement functionality as discussed herein.

Functionality supported by the different resources will now be discussed via flowcharts in FIGS. **10**, **11**, and **12**. Note that the steps in the flowcharts below can be executed in any suitable order.

FIG. **10** is a flowchart **1000** illustrating an example method according to embodiments. Note that there will be some overlap with respect to concepts as discussed above.

In processing block **1010**, aggregator resource **140** detects that a subscriber entity subscribes to at least a first content service provider **120-1** and a second content service provider **120-2**.

In processing block **1020**, the aggregator resource **140** receives a first message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the first content service provider **120-1**.

In processing block **1030**, the aggregator resource **140** receives a second message indicating content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the second content service provider **120-2**.

In processing block **1040**, the content guide generator resource **150** produces a content guide **160** to include at least first content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the first service provider **120-1** and second content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the second service provider **120-2**.

FIG. **11** is a flowchart **1100** illustrating an example method according to embodiments herein. Note that there will be some overlap with respect to concepts as discussed above.

In processing block **1110**, the redirector resource **220** monitors data traffic passing through a shared cable network path managed by a first content service provider **120-1**.

In processing block **1120**, the redirector resource **220** detects presence of a message indicating content available for retrieval by the subscriber from a second content service provider **120-2**. The message is transmitted to the subscriber over the shared cable network path.

In processing block **1130**, the redirector resource **220** communicates availability of the content as indicated by the message to a processing resource managed by the first content service provider **120-1**. In one embodiment, the first service provider **120-1** generates a content guide **160** as discussed herein.

FIG. **12** is a flowchart **1200** illustrating an example method according to embodiments herein. Note that there will be some overlap with respect to concepts as discussed above.

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In processing block **1210**, the aggregator resource **140** receives a content advertisement message from each of multiple resources in a network environment. Each of the content advertisement messages indicates availability of respective content from a corresponding resource in the network environment.

In processing block **1220**, the aggregator resource **140** produces a consolidated list indicating from which of the multiple resources the respective content is available for retrieval.

In processing block **1230**, the aggregator resource **140** distributes the consolidated list to a target resource such as a subscriber in the network environment.

Note again that techniques herein are well suited for producing content guides, each of which indicates content available to a corresponding subscriber. However, it should be noted that embodiments herein are not limited to use in such applications and that the techniques discussed herein are well suited for other applications as well.

Based on the description set forth herein, numerous specific details have been set forth to provide a thorough understanding of claimed subject matter. However, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that claimed subject matter may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, methods, apparatuses, systems, etc., that would be known by one of ordinary skill have not been described in detail so as not to obscure claimed subject matter. Some portions of the detailed description have been presented in terms of algorithms or symbolic representations of operations on data bits or binary digital signals stored within a computing system memory, such as a computer memory. These algorithmic descriptions or representations are examples of techniques used by those of ordinary skill in the data processing arts to convey the substance of their work to others skilled in the art. An algorithm as described herein, and generally, is considered to be a self-consistent sequence of operations or similar processing leading to a desired result. In this context, operations or processing involve physical manipulation of physical quantities. Typically, although not necessarily, such quantities may take the form of electrical or magnetic signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared or otherwise manipulated. It has been convenient at times, principally for reasons of common usage, to refer to such signals as bits, data, values, elements, symbols, characters, terms, numbers, numerals or the like. It should be understood, however, that all of these and similar terms are to be associated with appropriate physical quantities and are merely convenient labels. Unless specifically stated otherwise, as apparent from the following discussion, it is appreciated that throughout this specification discussions utilizing terms such as "processing," "computing," "calculating," "determining" or the like refer to actions or processes of a computing platform, such as a computer or a similar electronic computing device, that manipulates or transforms data represented as physical electronic or magnetic quantities within memories, registers, or other information storage devices, transmission devices, or display devices of the computing platform.

While this invention has been particularly shown and described with references to preferred embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and details may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present application as defined by the appended claims. Such variations are intended to be covered by the scope of this present application. As such, the foregoing description of embodiments

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of the present application is not intended to be limiting. Rather, any limitations to the invention are presented in the following claims.

I claim:

1. A method comprising:

via computer processor hardware, performing operations of:

receiving communications indicating content available to a subscriber entity for retrieval from a first content service provider and a second content service provider;

producing a content guide to include a first group of entries and a second group of entries, the first group of entries indicating different titles of content available from the first content service provider, the second group of entries indicating different titles of content available from the second content service provider; and

wherein producing the content guide further comprises: in response to receiving notification that the subscriber entity subscribes to the second content service provider, initiating retrieval of availability information indicating attributes of the second content available to the subscriber entity from the second content service provider.

2. The method as in claim 1, wherein producing the content guide further comprises:

interspersing the first group of entries in the content guide amongst the second group of entries in the content guide, at least one entry in the first group of entries indicating that the first content is available from the first content service provider, at least one entry from the second group of entries indicating that second content is available from the second content service provider.

3. The method as in claim 2, wherein the first content service provider provides a physical network service over which the first content is available for retrieval from the first content service provider, the physical network service also providing the subscriber entity access to the second content.

4. The method as in claim 3, wherein the second content is over-the-top content available to the subscriber entity over the Internet.

5. The method as in claim 1, wherein producing the content guide includes:

producing the content guide to include a first entry, the first entry indicating that the first content is available from the first content service provider; and

producing the content guide to include a second entry, the second entry indicating that the second content is available from the second content service provider.

6. The method as in claim 5, wherein producing the content guide includes:

producing the first entry in the content guide to indicate that the first content is retrievable via tuning to a television channel controlled by the first content service provider; and

producing the second entry in the content guide to indicate that the second content is retrievable from the second content service provider via communications to a corresponding network address of a server resource.

7. The method as in claim 6 further comprising:

in response to receiving selection of the first content displayed in a rendition of the content guide, tuning to the television channel to receive the first content; and

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in response to receiving selection of the second content displayed in the rendition of the content guide, initiating communications with the server resource to retrieve the second content.

8. The method as in claim 1 further comprising:

producing the content guide in response to detecting that the subscriber entity subscribes to services provided by both the first content service provider and the second content service provider.

9. The method as in claim 1 further comprising:

producing the content guide to be a unified listing that simultaneously displays: i) attributes of the first content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the first content service provider, and ii) attributes of the second content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the second content service provider.

10. A method comprising:

via computer processor hardware, performing operations of:

receiving a content guide including a unified listing of multiple entries of available content, the unified listing specifying: i) first content available to a subscriber entity for retrieval from a first content service provider, and ii) second content available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from a second content service provider, the content guide produced in response to detecting that the subscriber entity subscribes to services provided by both the first content service provider and the second content service provider; and

initiating distribution of the content guide over a shared communication link operated by the first content service provider to the subscriber entity.

11. The method as in claim 10, wherein the first content service provider is a cable network service provider that provides content delivery services over the shared communication link for retrieval of the first content.

12. The method as in claim 10, wherein the cable network service provider produces the content guide via input from the second content service provider.

13. The method as in claim 10, wherein initiating distribution of the content guide over the shared communication link includes:

transmitting the content guide over the shared communication link in response to receiving input from the subscriber entity to simultaneously view, in the unified listing on a display screen, titles of corresponding content available from a combination of the first content service provider and the second content service provider.

14. The method as in claim 10, wherein a rendition of the content guide simultaneously displayed by the subscriber entity displays a title of the first content available from the first content service provider and a title of the second content available from the second content service provider.

15. The method as in claim 10 further comprising:

receiving search criteria from the subscriber entity; searching the content guide for availability of particular content as specified by the search criteria; and

in response to detecting that the particular content as specified by the search criteria is available from both the first content service provider and the second content service provider, via the content guide, notifying the subscriber entity that the content as specified by the search criteria is available from both the first content service provider and the second content service provider.

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16. A computer system comprising:
 computer processor hardware; and
 a hardware storage resource coupled to the computer
 processor hardware, the hardware storage resource
 storing instructions that, when executed by the com- 5
 puter processor hardware, cause the computer proces-
 sor hardware to perform the operations of:
 receiving a content guide including a unified listing of
 multiple entries of available content, the unified
 listing specifying: i) first content available to the
 subscriber entity for retrieval from a first content
 service provider, and ii) second content available to
 the subscriber entity for retrieval from a second
 content service provider, the content guide produced
 in response to detecting that the subscriber entity 15
 subscribes to services provided by both the first
 content service provider and the second content
 service provider; and
 initiating distribution of the content guide over a shared
 communication link operated by the first content
 service provider to the subscriber entity.

17. The computer system as in claim 16, wherein the first
 content service provider is a cable network service provider
 that provides content delivery services over the shared
 communication link for retrieval of the first content.

18. The method as in claim 16, wherein the cable network
 service provider produces the content guide via input from
 the second content service provider.

19. The method as in claim 16, wherein initiating distri-
 bution of the content guide over the shared communication 30
 link includes:
 transmitting the content guide over the shared communi-
 cation link in response to receiving a request from the
 subscriber entity to simultaneously view, in a single
 unified listing on a display screen, titles of correspond- 35
 ing content available from a combination of the first
 content service provider and the second content service
 provider.

20. Computer-readable storage hardware having instruc-
 tions stored thereon, the instructions, when carried out by a
 processing device, causes the processing device to perform
 operations of: 40
 receiving communications indicating content available to
 a subscriber entity for retrieval from a first content
 service provider and a second content service provider;
 and
 producing a content guide to include a first group of
 entries and a second group of entries, the first group of
 entries indicating different titles of content available
 from the first content service provider, the second 50
 group of entries indicating different titles of content
 available from the second content service provider; and
 wherein producing the content guide further comprises: in
 response to receiving notification that the subscriber
 entity subscribes to the second content service provider, 55
 initiating retrieval of availability information indicating
 attributes of the second content available to the sub-
 scriber entity from the second content service provider.

21. A method comprising:
 via computer processor hardware, performing operations 60
 of:
 receiving communications indicating content available
 to a subscriber entity for retrieval from a first content
 service provider and a second content service pro-
 vider; 65
 producing a content guide to include a first group of
 entries and a second group of entries, the first group

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of entries indicating different titles of content avail-
 able from the first content service provider, the
 second group of entries indicating different titles of
 content available from the second content service
 provider; and
 producing the content guide in response to detecting
 that the subscriber entity subscribes to services pro-
 vided by both the first content service provider and
 the second content service provider.

22. The method as in claim 21, wherein producing the
 content guide further comprises:
 interspersing the first group of entries in the content guide
 amongst the second group of entries in the content
 guide, at least one entry in the first group of entries
 indicating that the first content is available from the
 first content service provider, at least one entry from the
 second group of entries indicating that second content
 is available from the second content service provider.

23. The method as in claim 22, wherein the first content
 service provider provides a physical network service over
 which the first content is available for retrieval from the first
 content service provider, the physical network service also
 providing the subscriber entity access to the second content.

24. The method as in claim 23, wherein the second
 content is over-the-top content available to the subscriber
 entity over the Internet.

25. The method as in claim 21, wherein producing the
 content guide includes:
 producing the content guide to include a first entry, the
 first entry indicating that the first content is available
 from the first content service provider; and
 producing the content guide to include a second entry, the
 second entry indicating that the second content is
 available from the second content service provider.

26. The method as in claim 25, wherein producing the
 content guide includes:
 producing the first entry in the content guide to indicate
 that the first content is retrievable via tuning to a
 television channel controlled by the first content service
 provider; and
 producing the second entry in the content guide to indi-
 cate that the second content is retrievable from the
 second content service provider via communications to
 a corresponding network address of a server resource.

27. The method as in claim 26 further comprising:
 in response to receiving selection of the first content
 displayed in a rendition of the content guide, tuning to
 the television channel to receive the first content; and
 in response to receiving selection of the second content
 displayed in the rendition of the content guide, initiat-
 ing communications with the server resource to retrieve
 the second content.

28. The method as in claim 21 further comprising:
 producing the content guide in response to detecting that
 the subscriber entity subscribes to services provided by
 both the first content service provider and the second
 content service provider.

29. The method as in claim 21 further comprising:
 producing the content guide to be a unified listing that
 simultaneously displays: i) attributes of the first content
 available to the subscriber entity for retrieval from the
 first content service provider, and ii) attributes of the
 second content available to the subscriber entity for
 retrieval from the second content service provider.